



**FORT MYERS BEACH TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBERS
2523 ESTERO BOULEVARD
FORT MYERS BEACH, FLORIDA 33931**

MINUTES

JOINT TOWN COUNCIL/CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER ADVISORY BOARD

WORK SESSION

Tuesday, August 3, 2011

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kiker called to order the August 3, 2011 Meeting of the Town Council at 9:02 a.m. Present along with Mayor Kiker: Council Members Kosinski, List and Mandel; Town Manager Stewart, and Town Clerk Mayher; Vice Mayor Raymond was excused.

CELCAB Members: Chair Simpson; Members Keene, Smith, Hill, Spuhler, Hill, and Ex-officio Grace; Member Wolf was excused. Staff: Director of Cultural Resources Schober

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. A VISION FOR MOUND HOUSE

CELCAB Chair Simpson noted the Board had previously met with the Council to discuss the vision for the Mound House. She explained that Board Member B. Hill worked on the vision for the historic site.

Board Member B. Hill clarified that she prepared a draft vision and the vision to be discussed today was a collective work of all the CELCAB members. She read the following into the record:

***Vision:** The historic Mound House museum complex will become southwest Florida's newest cultural jewel and treasured as a unique ecotourism destination featuring 2,000 years of island life.*

The Visitor Experience: Approaching the Mound House entrance, visitors will experience old Florida, delighting in the 2.8 acres of period landscaped bayfront property. As the oldest standing structure on Estero Island, the Mound House and grounds will be restored to its original 1921 grandeur using Florida's historic preservation standards. Meandering through the grounds on an ethno-botanical shell trail, visitors will learn about the tropical plants, trees and the orchard that flourished on the site during the early 20th century. Strategically placed educational signage will identify points of interest.

Upon entering the Mound House museum and paying the admission fee, the visitor will view a short introductory video or orientation about the history of the Mound House and the Calusa Indians. To assist visitors on self-guided tours of the museum, interpretive exhibit displays and signage provide glimpses of life as it existed at the time of the various owners. From the second floor screened porch, visitors will enjoy the pristine view of the mounds, mangroves and waterways from the highest elevation on the island, much as the ancient Calusa and earliest pioneers experienced. Interpretive signage will explain Florida's delicate ecosystem and conservation efforts. Volunteer-led group tours will be available on request.

Next on the tour will be the Calusa "Stories Beneath our Feet" underground exhibit. This world-class archeological site will offer visitors a rare walk inside a shell mound built by the Calusa Indians who inhabited this part of Florida 2,000 years ago. Once inside the darkened shell mound, visitors will view the 8-minute video about its excavation which revealed the daily lives of these Indians, providing a greater understanding and appreciation of this ancient culture.

Visitors are invited to stroll the grounds, view Matanzas Pass up close from the observation pier and visit the gift shop at their leisure during visiting hours.

Education Programs and Tours: Mound House staff, interns and volunteers will provide extensive on-site educational programs to children and youth such as school-led tours, workshops, summer day camps as well as off-site programming in the public schools. Adult educational activities include lectures, special events and kayak and boat tours designed to foster a greater understanding of southwest Florida's history and ecosystems.

Operations: As a source of great civic pride for all who live and work on Fort Myers Beach, the centrally located Mound House is owned and operated by the Town. As a signature cultural asset, beach residents will delight in bringing friends and relatives of all ages to visit the Mound House, to tour the museum, attend educational lectures and social events or just enjoy the quiet beauty of this extraordinary site.

Limited parking will be provided on the Mound House property with augmented parking on Connecticut Street. If deemed necessary, Connecticut Street will be widened to

accommodate a sidewalk that extends from the Mound House property to the Estero Boulevard bus stop for pedestrian traffic. Mound House staff and the Town of Fort Myers Beach will work on a phased plan of operations to have limited hours open to the public to ensure measured growth.

A key strategy in providing financial support, revenue from Mound House admission fees, membership dues, special fundraising events and campaigns, gift shop and grants will supplement funding from the Town.

The Mound House will be recognized as a historic site on the National Register of Historic Places and will receive recognition for its professional restoration practices by the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation.

She pointed out that many items listed within the statement have been accomplished through the support of Town Council (i.e. landscaping).

Discussion ensued concerning the vision statement and the scope of work as recommended by CELCAB; accomplished work and future needs; outside interpretative signage that was being funded by the Tourist Development Council; recommendations for phased admission fee pricing that would come before Council for approval along with rates for other Town facilities; and the open second floor porch for viewing at the Mound House versus the observation deck at the pier.

Town Manager Stewart explained there had been some controversy over whether or not the observation deck would be used for fishing since the pier of the deck was funded by the TDC. He noted the kayak launch was a separate area.

Discussion was held regarding fishing from the pier; possibly prohibiting fishing during the hours the site was open; fishing only after hours when the site was closed; and the possibility of requiring fishing from only on the pier and nowhere else on the site.

Consensus of CELCAB was that both the open second floor porch at the Mound House and the pier/deck were necessary for viewing purposes.

Discussion was held concerning the status of volunteer recruitment and retention; anticipated operating schedule; promotional/marketing efforts; projected number of visitors to the site; and available parking at the site.

Mayor Kiker discussed his view that the scale of the project needed to be reduced to 'match the pocketbook'. He pointed out that seeking registration with the National Register of Historic Places was expensive; explained some of the finer points of rehabilitative work using the National Register guidelines; and questioned the funding source for these aspects. He noted another goal and objective of the Council for the Mound House was to 'open it'.

CELCAB Board Member B. Hill explained that the designation with the National Register for Historic Places was not something they would pursue tomorrow or next year, rather that would be a goal to be pursued years from now.

Discussion was held concerning the difference between a vision and a strategy; getting the Mound House opened as soon as the lead paint abatement was completed; completing the specifications for the repair/renovation of the house which would be coming to Town Council for direction; and Town Manager Stewart indicated the lead paint abatement was the largest portion of the repair/renovation.

CELCAB Board Member Spuhler pointed out that to receive the funding from the Florida Communities Trust there needed to be a management plan; the plan needed to be followed; and she believed the Town was following the plan properly.

Discussion ensued concerning opening of the Mound House; and repair criteria of preservation standards as it pertained to the Mound House.

Discussion was held regarding the vision statement as presented by CELCAB; the current limited hours of operations; questioning when to begin charging an admission fee; and cooperative advertising/promotion between the Mound House and other local historic tours such as the Burrough's Home.

Cultural Resources Director Schober reported the Mound House property was closed for the next 60 days due to the lead paint abatement and it would then open on a limited schedule.

Discussion continued addressing the vision statement read into the record earlier in preparation for placement on the website. Chair Simpson tracked the recommended changes to the vision in a paragraph by paragraph format:

- Paragraph #1 - ***Vision:*** *The historic Mound House museum complex will be one of Southwest Florida's cultural jewels will become southwest Florida's newest cultural jewel and treasured as a unique ecotourism destination featuring 2,000 years of island life.*
- Paragraph #2 –change future tense to present throughout the document where appropriate.
- Paragraph #3 –take out “paying the admission fee”; entire paragraph addressed a future statement; change 8-minute video to a “short” video.
- Paragraph #4 – *Visitors are invited to stroll the grounds, view Matanzas Pass from the pier up close from the observation pier and visit the gift shop at their leisure during visiting hours.*
- Paragraph #5 –“*Adult educational and recreational activities...*”
- Paragraph #6 – add “maintain historical accuracy or integrity”
- Paragraph #7 –*Limited parking will be provided on the Mound House property and visitors are encouraged to by bicycle, by foot (include there are bicycle racks provided, how to pull up a boat) with augmented parking on Connecticut Street. If deemed necessary, Connecticut Street will be widened to accommodate a*

~~sidewalk that extends from the Mound House property to the Estero Boulevard bus stop for pedestrian traffic. Mound House staff and the Town of Fort Myers Beach will work on a phased plan of operations to have limited hours open to the public to ensure measured growth. (Mention visitors are welcome to come to the park and picnic; the site is a serene place to visit; opened sunrise to sunset; visitors are encouraged to carpool.)~~

- Paragraph #8 –remove.
- Paragraph #9 - ~~The Mound House is will be~~ recognized as a significant historic property by the State of Florida and is potentially eligible for registration with the historic site on the National Register of Historic Places and will receive recognition for its professional restoration practices by the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation. (Mention visitors are encouraged to enjoy the special events and fundraising events; the awards/recognition already received i.e. Florida Trust Presentation Award, and access to the Calusa Blue Wave Habitat Trail.)

Consensus was that CELCAB would finish the wording of the document, present it to the Board at their next meeting on August 25, 2011, and then bring it back to the Town Council for approval and endorsement.

Discussion was held regarding donations to the Mound House; and Mayor Kiker described how donations were treated by the Finance Department, and suggested the Friends of the Mound House consider a recognition program for donors.

Cultural Resources Director Schober discussed a grant application for the Mound House that was submitted to the TDC.

Mayor Kiker recounted the fundraising events held by Bay Oaks for a new van.

Discussion ensued concerning a membership program for the Mound House.

Mayor Kiker noted that in the future the Council needed to discuss parking and the observation deck, and they would be seeking input from CELCAB on these matters.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Adopted 10-3-11 With/Without changes. Motion by Lot Mandel

Vote: 4-0 (Kosinski absent)


Michelle D. Mayher, Town Clerk

- End of document.